

MERCATOR:

OR,

Commerce Retrieved,

BEING

CONSIDERATIONS on the State of the *British* Trade, &c.

From Saturday, December 12. to Tuesday, December 15. 1713.

*The Trade to Spain secur'd from French Influence by the Nature of Things.**The French could not supply the Spaniards in time of War, How should they do it in time of Peace?**A Letter to the Mercator upon the Occasion of the Marseilles-Factor.*

THE Case of the *MERCATOR* is very particular, (viz.) That he is Writing upon a Subject, which, for weighty Reasons of their own, there are some People among us Resolve, right or wrong, to have Cried down: For this especial End and Purpose, they find Noise as useful to them as Reason, and indeed much more; and Words are to them as Matters of Fact.

The French are not only not to be Traded with without Loss and Ruin to us; but they are now represented, as so formidable to us, that they will also ruin our Trade every where else.

The French will supply Spain with Manufactures, so that we shall have no Trade thither! Really, altho' this had been true, the *MERCATOR* does not see, what it is to the purpose, unless it be to Argue, that we should have carried on the War till the French should have promised to make no more Woollen Manufactures; the Justice of which some People would, no doubt, have found Reasons to have defended; For if the French could out-Trade us in other Nations, who could help it?

If the French were able to supply Spain and all the World with Manufactures, who could blame them for doing it? and what have we to say to it? But if all this is just the reverse, if they are not able to do it, if they really can Sell no Woollen Manufactures in Spain more than they always did; What then are we Wrangling about? Let us enquire then into the Matter of Fact.

1. It has been made appear, they could not do it in the time of the late War, when they had all the Trade to themselves, and when we were shut out of it by mutual Interdiction of Commerce. It has been proved, the Spaniards were obliged to Buy English Manufactures from all Parts, where they could find them: This they did from Portugal privately, from Leghorn and Genoa openly; and at last they Courted us to come to them, and Trade with them at their own Doors, offer'd Passports to our Ships, and the like; the French being not able any way to carry on their Trade.

It has been shewn to be thus even at Bilboa, a Port in the very Neighbourhood of France, and to which their Goods may be carried at a very little Expence, from the Coasts of Poictou, Guienne, &c. where their best Manufactures are made; yet our Exports to Bilboa of Woollen Manufactures are as great as ever.

Our Ignorant Complainers pretended the Spanish Wooll would be Ingrossed by the French, and we should get no Wooll to work with; nay, some were so weak to tell us, that now the French had the Spanish Wooll, they would Cut us out of our Manufactures by that means; as if Spain and France had not stood in the same Place, that they stood in before the War; but that as they are brought nearer in Political Interests to one another by the Peace, so they were join'd in Situation more than before.

But was it not always true, that the French might have what Spanish Wooll they pleased? And was it not always true, that they could have it Cheaper than the English, by their lying so much nearer? That they fetch'd it on Horseback to some Parts of France from Spain, as to Tholouse, and most Parts of Gasconne and Languedoc, and in small Barks by a very small Run to Poictou, to Rochel, Bourdeaux, &c.

In the time of War, the French might have had all this Wooll, if they pleased; yet they were in Distress in Spain to dispose of their Wooll; and the first Offer made to the English by the Spaniards for the opening the Trade, was from Bilboa; for the French were no more able to take off their Wooll, than they were to take off their Oil and Wine: They used a little indeed, as they ever did, to make a few sorry Druggers and thin Stuffs; but for the rest, they know not what to do with it; nor the Spaniards how to dispose of it without us. And this appears by the present State of that Trade, four or five Ships being arrived from Bilboa laden with Spanish Wooll, within these Ten Days past.

Such Manufacturers the French are! that when they had all the Trade to themselves, they could neither take off the Spanish Wooll off of the Hands of the Spaniards, nor supply them with Woollen Goods, no not to those Towns in Spain, which lay, as it were, at their own Doors; and yet these are the Men, who are to supply all the World with Woollen Manufactures.

To go yet farther: In the Trade to New Spain, which the French had Engrossed, as it were, to themselves, they were so far from being able to supply the Spanish West-Indies with Woollen Goods, that notwithstanding the great and many Prizes they took from us, and the great Quantity of such Goods, which they took in them, yet the Merchants were obliged, as a known Author affirms,

affirms, to get Leave of the King of France to buy a great Quantity of English Goods in Holland, no less than Twenty thousand Pounds at a time, and bring them to St. Malo, to make up their Cargoes sortable for the Spanish West-Indies.

This they would never have done, if they could have been supplied out of their own Manufacture; nor would the King have granted them Leave, if he had not been satisfied, that his own Subjects could not furnish those Goods.

The Sum of this Discourse, is to prove, that the French, whatever Influence they may be supposed to have over the Spanish Affairs, cannot do any prejudice to us in our Trade to Spain, at least, not so as to endanger it, as has been reported; for they can neither take off the Growth of Spain from the Spaniards, nor supply the Demands of the Spaniards for Woollen Manufactures.

The following, is a second Letter from the same Hand as the last; and, which was mentioned in the last *MERCATOR*. The *MERCATOR* is ready at any time to prove the Falsity of those Peoples Suggestion, who suggest these Letters to be written by the same Hand with the *MERCATOR*; by producing, if there is occasion, not the Original Writing only, but the Writer also.

To the Mercator.

IF the Opposers of your Paper did not write, as you have formerly observed, to a People, who are willing to be Imposed upon in the grossest manner, and prepar'd by their stupifying Prejudices to receive the grossest Delusions; the Tools they employ could never offer such ridiculous Things to the World as they do.

You had unanswerably prov'd, that the Trade to France is carried on under such Circumstances, as that the true Export cannot be known, and consequently that no Account from the Custom-house Books can give a true Scheme of the Trade; you had shewn, that great Quantities of English Goods are daily Enter'd at the Custom-house for Flanders, which go to France directly, and you might have said to Holland also; you had proved beyond the Power of Cavil it self, that the North Parts of France are supplied with all our Goods by the Navigation of the Rivers Maese, Sambre, Moselle, Saar, and the Rhine, all which meet in the general Port of that part of the World, (viz.) in Holland; and therefore that those Parts of France are supplied by the Dutch: And nothing can be more absurd, than what they pretend to offer to evade the Force of this: They may as well tell us that Wales is supplied from London with Sugar, Tobacco, and such heavy Goods, by Land-Carriage; when they can have them all from Bristol, by Water: The Case *mutatis mutandis* is exactly the same.

Well, to confirm your Argument in this case, you brought in *MERCATOR* No. —. an Example, which I confess I thought would have silenc'd the Devil himself; this was the Affair of the Ship called the *Marseilles-Factor*, a Ship Enter'd out, as others are every Day, for the Straights, but actually bound to *Marseilles*, as her very Name might have told them, and actually loaded thither.

It is true, there never was but one Entry made honestly on board her for *Marseilles*, viz. 31091 l. Pepper. So if the Parliament was to ask the Commissioners of the Customs, what Goods were sent to France that Year, they would give an Account of nothing but 31091 l. Pepper in that Ship; whereas besides great Quantities of other Goods, I am very well inform'd there went on Board that very Ship the following Goods or great part of them, (viz.)

52 Fodder of Lead.

2217 Barrels of Red Herrings.

32 Bales of Woollen Manufactures and Leather.

12 Ton of Allom.

In short, as I have good Reason to affirm the Ship was wholly loaden to *Marseilles*, so they have not offer'd the least Reason against it.

Now let the World judge of these Men by their Answer to this, which is thus: *Marseilles*, say they, is a Free Port, and there is no Custom paid there till the Goods are carried farther into France; but *Marseilles* is to be look'd upon as a Store-house only, from whence the Goods are sent to other Parts.

Was ever so mean a Shuffle, so ridiculous a Wheedle, put upon the World! Could any thing but a run-away Attorney, turn'd *British Merchant*, talk after this manner! Would he not be hiss'd off of the Exchange, that should answer any Man thus in Matters of Trade!

Suppose *Marseilles*, as he says, a free Port, tho' that is not true in Fact, as to all sorts of Goods; what then, Is *Marseilles* in France, or is it not? Is it any thing to us, whether the French may send any of our Goods, when they have them? Are we not, however, to reckon the Goods we send actually to any Port of France, part of the French Trade, tho' they were to be Exported afterward?

Besides, Will these People pretend, that the French buy our Manufactures to Transport to other Countries! Sure they will never grant that! What then will become of the mighty Encrease of the Woollen Manufacture in France, with which they are to supply all the World, and shut us out! What, has this Man brought the French to be Pimps to their own Rivals! and Cuckold their own Trade! That instead of the Supplying the World with Manufactures, they should be only Factors for ours, to receive them, and lodge them at *Marseilles*, and then send them to other Places! What Absurdities does this Man run himself into!

But even in this Absurdity they are plunged into a most inextricable Labyrinth, to let us know, to what Ports in the World the French Merchants can carry our Goods, where we do not go directly and carry our own Goods, and consequently can carry them cheaper than they.

And had these pettyfogging Merchants understood the Geography of the Mediterranean, they would have been ashamed of these miserable Shifts.

Marseilles lies at the bottom of the Gulph of Lyons, and is out of the way to any other Port of the Straights, Genoa excepted, a very great way, and by the Difficulty of the Place with respect to the Winds, much more.

Will these Men perswade us, for Example, that Red Herrings, Salted Pork, and such Goods, are carried up to *Marseilles* to be Ship'd again, and carried to other Places? Is not the Uncertainty of the Weather, and Expence of Time, too great a Risque in that ticklish Commodity to make it rational? And do not our Ships go directly with Red Herrings to all the Ports in the Straights, and the like of other Goods.

Sure such foolish Shuffling must first or last awaken the People of this Nation to see, how they are Imposed upon! I shall trouble you with a farther Proof of this Trade in my next.

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